

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9925

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER CHANGE CREATES POLITICAL
EXCITEMENT

REF: LAHORE 0396 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: SIGNIFICANT LOCAL POLITICAL EXCITEMENT IS
ACCOMPANYING REPLACEMENT OF MOSTAFA KHAR BY HANEEF RAMAY IN
POSITION OF CHIEF MINISTER PUNJAB. RAMAY TAKES OFFICE TODAY,
MARCH 15, AFTER SEVERAL DAYS DURING WHICH PRO-KHARSOLEMENTS
AGITATED FOR HIS REINSTATEMENT. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO HAS
RETURNED TO LAHORE TO CALM SITUATION DOWN AND APPEARS TO BE
SUCCESSFUL. AFTER YEARS OF KHAR'S EARTHY ROUGHHOUSE POLITICAL
TACTICS, BASED ON STRONG RURAL AND LANDLORD SUPPORT, SOFT-
SPOKEN LAHORE-BORN RAMAY SHOULD EXERCISE UNIFYING AND CALMING
INFLUENCE BUT MAY HAVE TOUGH TIME IF KHAR AND HIS SUPPORTERS
REFUSE TO COOPERATE. DIVISION BETWEEN KHAR AND RAMAY SUPPORTERS
WILL NOT DIE DOWN IMMEDIATELY; RAMAY'S STRONG COMMITMENT
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ISLAMIC SOCIALISM BRINGS INTO OPEN BASIC IDEOLOGICAL

DIFFERENCES WITHIN PPP. END SUMMARY.

1. REPLACEMENT OF MOSTAFA KHAR BY HANEEF RAMAYHCD POSITION OF CHIEF MINISTER PUNJAB IS SPARKING GREATEST POLITICAL EXCITEMENT IN PUNJAB SINCE EARLY DAYS OF BHUTTO REGIME. IN VERY REAL SENSE, PPP IN PUNJAB IS FACING MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO DATE TO ITS INTERNAL COHESION. OUR JUDGMENT IS THAT KHAR IS ACCEPTING, AND WILL ACCEPT, THE NEW SITUATION, BUT PRO-KHAR ELEMENTS IN PROVINCIAL GOVT AND IN PARTY ARE RESENTFUL AND PERHAPS FRIGHTENED AND MAY MAKE LIKE DIFFICULT FOR RAMAY. BHUTTO IS IN LAHORE SPECIFICALLY FOR PURPOSE OF CONTROLLING SITUATION CREATED BY KHAR'S RESIGNATION AND RAMAY'S APPOINTMENT. EXERCISING HIS POLITICAL MAGIC FULLY, AND ACTING AS BOTH PRIME MINISTER AND CHAIRMAN OF PARTY, BHUTTO IS KEEPING MAY AND KHAR BY HIS SIDE THROUGH SERIES OF BOTH LARGE, AND SELECT, MEETINGS WITH PPP LEADERS, MPA'S, MNA'S, ETC. ACCORDING TO PRESS, CORROBORATED BY OUR SOURCES, HIS THEME, PATIENTLY AND FIRMLY REPEATED OVER AND OVER, IS THAT KHAR REMAINS HIS CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND BUT THAT PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP CANNOT INTERFERE WITH WORKINGS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS.

2. RAMAY WAS ONLY CANDIDATE FOR WHOM NOMINATION PAPERS WERE FILED WITH SECRETARY OF PUNJAB ASSEMBLY BY CUT-OFF TIME MID-DAY WEDNESDAY. ASSEMBLY SECRETARY DECLARED RAMAY ELECTED UNOPPOSED AT MID-DAY THURSDAY, MARCH 14, WHICH WAS APPOINTED HOUR FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ANY CANDIDATURES. RAMAY WILL TAKE OATH OF OFFICE EVENING OF MARCH 15 BEFORE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, RAMAY IS UNLIKELY TO ANNOUNCE ANY OF HIS CABINET AT THIS TIME.

3. AS WEEK DEVELOPED, ATMOSPHERICS IN THIS CITY EXCITED BY MAJOR PROVINCE-LEVEL POLITICAL UPHEAVAL BECAME INTERESTING PART OF PICTURE. THOSE ELEMENTS WHICH APPARENTLY FEEL MOST THREATENED BY KHAR'S DEPARTURE, LED BY FORMER PROVINCIAL COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER (AND STILL MPA) MIAN IFTIKHAR TARI AND INCLUDING LAW MINISTER KAHLAON, LOCAL GOVT MINISTER TALIB HUSSAIN, AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER CHAUDHRY IRSHAD, HAVE BEEN GATHERING TOGETHER CROWDS OF PRO-KHAR PARTY WORKERS AND SEARCHING FOR PLACES AND TIMES TO USE THEM IN TRADITIONAL HEAVY-HANDED KHAR-TARI FASHION TO DEMONSTRATE TO EVERYONE, PERHAPS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER, THAT KHAR SHOULD REMAIN AS CHIEF MINISTER. FIRST NEAR-INCIDENT OCCURRED AT LAHORE AIRPORT ON MARCH 12 WHEN PPP WORKERS LED BY HIGHLY AGITATED TARI, ON HAND TO GREET KHAR RETURNING FROM LARKANA, CLASHED WITH TEHRIK WORKERS THERE TO SEE OF AIR MARSHAL ASGHAR KHAN WHO WAS LEAVING FOR LONDON. EYE WITNESS ACCOUNTS CONFIRM PRESS REPORTS THAT TENSIONS QUICKLY MOUNTED BETWEEN THE GROUPS, GUNS APPEARED, AND TARI PERSONALLY ATTEMPTED (FORTUNATELY UNSUCCESSFULLY)

TO SNATCH STEN GUN FROM KHAR'S BODYGUARD TO USE ON TEHRIK WORKERS. POLICE INTERVENTION DIVIDED TWO GROUPS AND SERIOUS INCIDENT WAS AVERTED. KHAR UPON ARRIVAL TOLD PPP CROWD THAT BHUTTO HAD ASKED HIM TO DELAY HIS DEPARTURE BUT THAT HE INSISTED ON LEAVING NOW. HE SAID HE WOULD ACCEPT NO NEW GOVERNMENTAL POSITION OR AMBASSADORSHIP.

4. ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, BHUTTO RETURNED TO LAHORE FROM LARKANA TO BE GREETED AT AIRPORT BY RAMAY, KHAR, GOVERNOR QURESHI, AND TOP PARTY PEOPLE IN PROVINCE, AS WELL AS SEVERAL HUNDRED PARTY WORKERS. PRO-RAMAY ELEMENTS SEEMED TO US TO WIN SLOGAN SHOUTING CONTEST. PRIME MINISTER ATTEMPTED TO CALM CROWD. EXCITEMENT RAN HIGH AS CROWD BROKE INTO VIP ENCLOSURE AFTER BHUTTO'S CAVALCADE DEPARTED, BUT AGAIN POLICE DISPERSED WORKERS AND NO INCIDENT OCCURRED.

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5. ON THURSDAY, MARCH 14, STUDENTS FROM SEVERAL LOCAL UNIVERSITIES, FROM STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED BY KHAR, STAGED DEMONSTRATIONS ON CENTRAL MALL ROAD TO DEMAND KHAR'S REINSTATEMENT AS CHIEF MINISTER. POLICE LATHI-CHARGED DEMONSTRATORS AND ARRESTED OVER TWENTY. REMAINING STUDENTS

BURNED ONE BUS AND ONE VAN AND DESTROYED SOME STOREFRONTS BEFORE BEING DISPERSED. EYE WITNESSES REPORTED THAT TARI, KAHLAON, AND KHAR'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT JAVED-UR-RAHMAN WERE WITH STUDENTS IN EARLY STAGES OF DEMONSTRATION.

6. LEADING FIGURES FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ARE IN LAHORE, PUBLICLY DECLARING THEIR SUPPORT FOR RAMAY. MINISTERS MOBASHER HASAN AND KURSHID HASSAN MEER HAVE BEEN MOST LITERALLY SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER WITH RAMAY ALL WEEK; BOTH HAVE ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT. LAW MINISTER PIRZADA RETURNED WITH BHUTTO FROM LARKANA AND IS REPORTED TO BE WORKING VERY HARD ON RAMAY'S BEHALF. HEALTH MINISTER SHEIKH RASHID RETURNED FROM HIS U.S. TRIP MARCH 15 AND IMMEDIATELY DECLARED HIS SUPPORT FOR RAMAY.

7. COMMENT: DIVISION BETWEEN KHAR AND RAMAY SUPPORTERS IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PUNJAB WILL NOT DIE DOWN IMMEDIATELY BECAUSE IT HAS BROUGHT BASIC IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES INTO OPEN. KHAR HAS NO POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AS SUCH DESPITE HIS LIP SERVICE TO PPP MANIFESTO. RATHER, HE REPRESENTS SOUTHERN PUNJAB LANDLORD ELEMENT STEEPED IN CLIENT-PATRON WAY OF LIFE WHO DEVELOPED VERY STRONG AND EMOTIONAL CLIENT TIES WITH BHUTTO AFTER LATTER'S BREAK WITH AYUB. KHAR IS FROM COUNTRY-SIDE AND IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN MIXING WITH AND TALKING TO RURAL MASSES IN THEIR OWN ROUGH AND COLORFUL PATOIS. HE HAS WORKED HIS POLITICS WHILE IN POWER IN GOOD OLD POLITICAL BOSS TRADITION, SCATTERING FAVORS AND GOODIES WIDELY BUT JUDICIOUSLY, AND BUILDING UP COMPLEX BUT EFFECTIVE SKEIN OF FOLLOWERS WHO OWE HIM FAVORS. WHETHER HE WILL NOW CHOOSE TO RETIRE QUIETLY, RESIGNING EVEN HIS PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT (AS HE HAS SAID PUBLICLY HE WILL), OR WILL USE HIS FOLLOWING TO CHALLENGE RAMAY (AND THEREBY BHUTTO) REMAINS TO BE SEEN. OUR INITIAL JUDGMENT IS THAT HE WILL PROBABLY BEHAVE HIMSELF BUT WILL HAVE TO HAVE HIS HAND HELD BY BHUTTO FROM TIME TO TIME; WE WOULD ALSO JUDGE THAT KEEPING KHAR AND HIS FOLLOWERS PLACATED MAY BE ONE OF RAMAY'S TOUGHER POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHILE IN OFFICE. ONE EXAMPLE: NUMBER OF KHAR'S LIEUTENANTS (AND POSSIBLY KHAR HIMSELF) HAVE BEEN PROFITTING GREATLY FROM POSITIONS OF POWER; RAMAY, KNOWN FOR HIS HONESTY, MUST NOW DECIDE WHAT IF ANYTHING TO DO ABOUT THAT SITUATION.

8. RAMAY HAS DEFINITE IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT TO PPP CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC SOCIALISM AND, INDEED, HAS BEEN MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO FORMATION OF PARTY IDEOLOGICAL STAND. IN MANY OTHER WAYS AS WELL, HE STANDS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO KHAR. HE IS A GENUINE LAHORI, BORN HERE INTO A MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY. HE HAS NO LANDLORD OR RURAL CONNECTION AND IS NOT DEPENDENT ON LANDLORD SUPPORT, BUT HE IS ALSO NOT AS MUCH IN TOUCH WITH RURAL AREAS AS COUNTRYMAN KHAR. RAMAY IS AN INTELLECTUAL, A TEACHER,

JOURNALIST, PAINTER OF SORTS (ONE CAN VISUALIZE KHAR AND COMPANY CURLING THEIR LIPS AT THAT), AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKER BUT NOT A KHAR-TARI TYPE OF RABBLE-ROUSER. KHAAR WOULD APPEAR TO BE ACTION-ORIENTED BUT OFTEN SEEMS TO EQUATE PUBLIC DECLARATIONS OF INTENT WITH CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS; RAMAY MAY PROMISE LESS BUT DO MORE.

9. FUTURE AS USUAL IS DIFFICULT TO FATHOM. RAMAY'S CHOICE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF CABINET WILL BE IMPORTANT; OUR SOURCES PREDICT HE WILL BRING IN MOST EFFECTIVE PEOPLE HE CAN FIND WHO ARE IDEOLOGICALLY ACCEPTABLE, OR AT LEAST NEUTRAL. THIS MAY WELL INCLUDE SOME HOLD-OVERS FROM KHAR'S CABINET, SUCH AS KHALIQ (INDUSTRIES), KARDAR (EDUCATION), BRIG. SAHIBDAD (TRANSPORT), PERHAPS SHAUKAT MAHMOOD (HEALTH), BUT WILL MEAN SOME NEW FACES IN KEY POSITIONS. OUR SOURCES CLAIM PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY PPP MEMBERSHIP ROUGHLY EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN PRO-RAMAY AND PRO-KHAR GROUPS. IF PRO-KHAR ELEMENTS JOIN WITH POLITICAL OPPOSITION, WHICH IS HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS OF RAMAY'S ISLAMIC SOCIALISM, NEW CHIEF MINISTER COULD HAVE TOUGH TIME. MAJORITY OF STUDENTS WILL PROBABLY WELCOME RAMAY'S R
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